

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW WITH DAVID M. JOHNSON
CONDUCTED, EDITED, AND INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT
for the
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Monday, 20 August 2007
Location: CIE/CETL House, Kennesaw State University

TS: Today we're interviewing David Johnson who won the Distinguished Teaching Award for 2007. David, why don't we just begin by asking you when and where you were born and a little bit about your background?

DJ: Well, I was born in 1967 in Tyler, Texas. I grew up there and went to high school. My undergraduate I did at the University of Dallas. I didn't go too far away. I was actually a theology major with a minor in Spanish, so at that point I wanted to teach high school—that's what I thought I would make my career. I taught at a south Dallas high school for two years. It was a Catholic school, so I taught there, and I was the basketball coach for one of them. I did that for two years and then decided that was not what I wanted to do for the next thirty or forty years, so I decided to go back to graduate school. I thought about going into theology, but I thought I'd have more opportunities in language. I'd always been interested in language, so I went to Texas A&M University, and I did a master's in Spanish there. I was a TA [teaching assistant] for the whole time I was there. I graduated from there in 1994. I graduated with my BA in 1990, and '94 is when I got married. My wife was also at Texas A&M, so I graduated and got married in one week. We loaded up the truck and went up to Purdue for our Ph.D.s. So we were there for five years, from '94 to '99. Then I finished in '99, and my wife just had a little bit left to do, so we decided to go ahead and go on the market. In '98 I went on the job market, and I interviewed five places, and Kennesaw was one of them. I interview with Dr. Laura [S.] Dabundo [Professor of English, former head of English Department], and at the MLA . . .

TS: MLA is the Modern Language Association, so this was their meeting that year?

DJ: Their main meeting. That happened to be in San Francisco, and that was an interesting trip because I was worried about my flight being late because I had five interview lined up. Of course, my flight was late, and the night before I came down with this horrible cold. I coughed over the first four interviews. Kennesaw was the last one.

TS: You must have been exhausted by then.

DJ: Well, at that point, I thought, well, this is going to be an entire waste. I'll try again next year. I don't know if that actually relaxed me or not, but the interview with Dr. Dabundo went really well. She asked me to come to campus, and I came, and they made me an offer, so I've been here since 1999.

TS: All right. Well, that covers a lot of history in a hurry.

DJ: That's a whole bunch. That's the quick history.

TS: Let's just back up now, and let me ask you a few questions about some of the things you mentioned along the way. First of all, why theology as your major as an undergraduate?

DJ: Well, I was always interested in that; I liked reading theology and studying it, and I thought about the priesthood at one time, but decided that wasn't the route I wanted to go. I thought I wanted to teach in a Catholic high school in my career, so I thought, well, theology would be the way to go. It was very interesting, and I did the language on the side.

TS: Well, theology and literature go hand in hand, I think.

DJ: Right. Well, I didn't do a whole lot with the literature per se; I got more into linguistics. That's more my area in English than pure literature. I did a fair amount of literature—we all have to—but mine was more linguistics.

TS: Did you think about teaching in a Catholic college with theology?

DJ: I did, and actually I went up to interview at Saint Louis University. The department chair said, "That's fine, you can come do your Ph.D., but just realize there are just so many universities, and if they are full, you won't get a job teaching." So I thought I better broaden the possibilities a little bit.

TS: I guess the Catholic universities too are kind of overloaded with priest scholars, aren't they?

DJ: A lot of times, quite a few; there are quite a few lay theology professors as well. I had several myself.

TS: Right. But that does sound like an attractive career option to teach in a seminary somewhere.

DJ: Something like that. At the University of Dallas and most Catholic colleges all the students are required to take a basic theology course.

TS: Is University of Dallas a Catholic college?

DJ: It is a Catholic college.

TS: I didn't know that.

DJ: It's kind of like basic history or basic English, all the students have to take a course or two in theology as part of their schooling, so that's why they need people to teach it.

TS: I see. But at any rate an interest, but not one that necessarily had the greatest job opportunity.

DJ: That's basically it, and teaching at a Catholic high school—it was just not enough money to support a family, and that was an overarching decision.

TS: And then the Spanish for a minor, how did that come about?

DJ: When I started college, I had done three years of Latin in high school, and I wanted to start a new language, and I really was fascinated with Spanish and really close to a couple of the professors that taught there, and I did several Study Abroads in the Dominican Republic and Mexico that really beefed up my language skills, so that was just something I was interested in.

TS: Right. And so you carried that through the master's?

DJ: My master's was half literature, half linguistics, and then at the Ph.D. I started gearing more to general linguistics, even English linguistics and language acquisition—how somebody acquires a first or second language acquisition. That was my main area.

TS: How somebody acquires a . . . ?

DJ: A first language. As a child, you know, what exactly goes on in the brain . . .

TS: To pick up the language so quickly.

DJ: Right. Either the first language or their second language, that's what I was interested in.

TS: And if they're in a multi-cultural situation they may pick up two languages very quickly.

DJ: Exactly, exactly. So that always fascinated me—and Purdue had a good program in that.

TS: And then the older folks, it can take forever.

DJ: Well, it can, and there are a lot of different factors that go into that as far as motivation and cognitive functions and all of that.

TS: So that's what you were focused in?

DJ: That's what I wanted to focus in. Kennesaw State hired me to work with English as second language learners in the composition section. That's what the job was, and that's a lot of what I still do is teach composition sections to folks who aren't native speakers of English who maybe need a little extra help.

TS: Which we have plenty of on our campus now.

DJ: It keeps growing.

TS: What do we have, students from a hundred and something different countries?

DJ: Something like that.

TS: And well over a thousand, isn't it, international students?

DJ: Maybe close to 2,000. I think 1,600 was the last number I heard. Something in that range.

TS: So a pretty large number when you think about it.

DJ: It's a large number.

TS: Probably a larger number than we have of students from Georgia who aren't from the immediate twenty-five mile radius.

DJ: Exactly. And I've never understood how the international students find Kennesaw. I think it is more word of mouth when they go to their home country and that sort of thing because it doesn't have the reputation of some of the big schools, but apparently a lot of international students find their way here for one reason or another.

TS: It sounds like, I was looking on the website for one of the flagship state institutions in the South, and they were bragging about having students from eighty-five countries, and I was just thinking, we've got more than that here.

DJ: Well, you look at the composition class that I teach, and it's all non-native speakers, so you'll have sometimes sixteen different countries represented in that one class; several from Latin American countries, Europe, and a lot from Asia.

TS: So maybe five or six or eight or ten different languages, primary languages.

DJ: Exactly. Eight, nine, ten. There are a lot of African students, Middle Eastern students, and it's all in one twenty-five-student section. so there's a lot of interesting dynamics there.

TS: Back in 1990 when you were doing your undergraduate and thinking about going to graduate school, were you thinking, "We've got a lot of Spanish speaking people in Texas, and this is why I'm interested in Spanish?"

DJ: Well, that was part of it. I didn't want to study German and never have the chance to speak German. There are so many opportunities to speak Spanish in Texas, so that was a big part of it, why Spanish instead of French or another language.

TS: Right. And, of course, Texas would be way ahead of Georgia in having a large Latino population.

- DJ: Right. Although I think Georgia is catching up.
- TS: It's catching up, that's right.
- DJ: But, yes, there's been a large Latino population for a long time.
- TS: I remember a few year back the city council of Smyrna was passing resolutions telling local businesses you can use only English to advertise, and now you go through Smyrna, and every business down there has Spanish language in their signs and what-have-you. The world has changed.
- DJ: Right. I teach an upper level linguistics class, and that's part of the issues we talk about when the Spanish and English languages collide, how does it affect teachers in the classroom because you have all these Latino children and their parents, and people get upset that English seems to be "threatened," and so that's one of the issues we talk about quite a bit. And it goes well with what's going on in Georgia right now.
- TS: Yes. What did you do your master's thesis on?
- DJ: I didn't do a thesis. I did the option of taking two more courses, so I didn't do a thesis per se when I did my master's.
- TS: Why wouldn't anybody jump at two more courses?
- DJ: Well, that's right. I think most students actually did that that I was in classes with.
- TS: What about on the doctoral level at Purdue? What did you do your dissertation on?
- DJ: My dissertation was a study of a second language school, and I did lots of interviews actually, so I am more used to being the interviewer rather than the interviewee. I did a lot of interviews with adult students learning English and what they thought were the best procedures in classes. Then I did a lot of interviews with teachers, and I tried to show that there was a lot of disconnect of what the teachers though was the best thing and what the students thought was the best thing, because these were adult students, and they had their own ideas about these are the kinds of procedures we should do.
- TS: This was one school that you studied?
- DJ: This was one school that I studied. I interviewed a fair number of students, all the teachers, and I did it a lot of group interviews too. I would get a group of Chinese students, and they would have a different perspective than the Korean students or than the Latino students. There was a little bit of tension sometimes at this school because the Chinese students though the Latino students dominated class too much; there were a lot of cultural issues going on there. The Latino students were frustrated that the Asian students wouldn't speak as much, and so there were interesting classroom dynamics. I did a lot of interviews and transcribing and research on that; that was the dissertation.

- TS: And these are night classes that they're taking?
- DJ: The school was set up mostly for spouses of full-time students at Purdue because Purdue had a huge international population. So while their spouses were in class all day, they had nothing to do. And they didn't have access to English. So Purdue set up a school for them. It wasn't a for credit, although some of them would get up to speed on their English and then matriculate into the university. But for the most part it was just so they could use English. They would be there, two, three, four, five years and they didn't want to be isolated.
- TS: I gather at Purdue that a lot of guys would be attracted to study engineering or computer science and so on.
- DJ: There were a lot of engineers. The school was majority female because their husbands would be off studying engineering, and they would sit at home all day. So this would give them something to do as well as something practical—experience with the English. That's what the dissertation was on.
- TS: So you found some big differences between different nationalities and also differences in perception between students and teachers.
- DJ: Right. There were different perceptions and that was a lot of what I studied in class—what are the best procedures according to the research? What I tried to contribute was, well, that's what the research says, but the students may have a different idea, and that disconnect would cause some tension in the classroom, so it may be counterproductive.
- TS: What was the college that you were in at Purdue?
- DJ: I was in the College of Liberal Arts. I was in the English department.
- TS: But it sounds like it's got a lot of education components to it.
- DJ: Yes, ESL (English as a Second Language) is typically either housed in education departments, and that's where it is here at Kennesaw, or in English departments. Wherever it's housed there's a lot of education. It's mostly dealing with classroom learning of English.
- TS: Did you have to take some education courses along the way?
- DJ: I did. I took several along the way.
- TS: And I guess you probably took some at Dallas, didn't you, since you taught in the schools for a while?

DJ: I did. I was not a certified teacher because at that time you did not have to be certified to teach in the private schools, but I went ahead and took some just so I could be prepared to teach. I've always taken a lot of education courses along the way. That's always been my focus.

TS: One thing we've been asking everybody is about mentors along the way. Are there any mentors who stand out?

DJ: At the University of Dallas I had a professor by the name of Dr. John Crain. He was a long-time teacher in the public school system, and then he started teaching at the University of Dallas—teacher preparation courses. He was a big influence on my teaching. The course I took with him was a real nuts and bolts course: this is how you teach a class. As you know, it's a good transition from the other side of the desk when you're teaching, so that was a Godsend. Without that I would have just been a failure for two years of high school. There were a lot of failures anyway, but he actually—and he didn't have to do this because I was graduated at the time—came [to watch me teach]. I called him a couple of times to ask his advice. He said, "Well, let me come watch you teach." He drove all the way across town for two or three hours to watch me teach and then sat down with me after and said, "This is what you did good; this is what you need to work on." That was just out of the goodness of his heart; he didn't have to do that. So he was a big influence. My wife also had him for class, a different class.

TS: What's your wife's name?

DJ: My wife's name is Priya. It's actually an Indian name; she's from south India. We met at the University of Dallas, and she was a couple of years behind me, but she had Dr. Crain in some courses too. She ended up getting her Ph.D. in Education at Purdue. So we've always done a lot of shop talk at home through the years about education and how to teach and that sort of thing. She's an adjunct here from time to time at Kennesaw. So he had an enormous impact on me and my wife as far as teaching, so we'd often sit around and say, "Okay, here's the situation; what would Dr. Crain say about this?"—ten years later.

TS: Obviously, English would be her first language, but did she have any other languages?

DJ: Well, actually her first language was a language called Malayalam but in India almost everybody is bi-lingual with English. So Malayalam was her first language, and then English was her second, but she came to the States when she was in second grade, so she was quickly acclimated to the system here.

TS: Can she still speak . . . ?

DJ: She understands everything and can speak quite a bit. Her parents, of course, still speak it, but they've been here now thirty-five years or something like that, so they're fairly well acclimated in the culture and all that.

- TS: Right. And don't get too much opportunity to speak their native language.
- DJ: Not a whole lot; there are some folks in the international community that seek each other out and talk about home and that sort of thing. So there is some contact with other speakers from that part of India.
- TS: Any other mentors?
- DJ: Well, I would probably say my dissertation advisor, Dr. Margie Berns. Actually her husband, Tony Silva—they both taught in the English department at Purdue. Linguistics and second language learning was their area, so I took a lot of classes with both of them, and they were a big influence on me. They were both on my committee. Margie was the chair of my committee. So they were a big influence as mentors. I'm still in touch with them from time to time; I see them at conferences and that sort of thing.
- TS: Right. Okay, so you finished your doctorate, and that same year got offered a job at Kennesaw. We usually ask people why they came to Kennesaw.
- DJ: Well, I was offered two jobs, this one and I was offered a job in Texas. It was a very small school in a very small town in far west Texas, just south of El Paso, southeast from El Paso, just about fifty miles from the border of Mexico. We had both job offers, and I looked at my wife, and she just said, "I don't think I could live in such a small town." That was part of the factor, and it seemed like Kennesaw had more the kind of classes that I would be able to teach here. It was a tough decision, but ultimately having the metropolitan area and the kind of courses I could teach—I had a good feeling when I came here to do the interview and the people I met. I had never even been to Georgia when I came to interview, so it was an experience just going through that. They offered, and I ultimately came, and I started in 1999.
- TS: Well, let's maybe talk a little bit, first of all, about what Kennesaw was like when you came here in '99; what was your impression?
- DJ: Well, we talked a lit bit earlier. I think it's changed. There was not the emphasis on—at least I didn't get the message that there was an emphasis on—research. It was always there; you always had to do some; but everybody I talked to—Linda Noble was dean at the time and Laura Dabundo was chair—said teaching is first and foremost. That was the kind of place I was looking for. It was a four-four teaching load. The other thing, they not only wanted you to have teaching as your first area, but they wanted anything innovative in teaching, they were very open to trying new ideas out, and they said, "Before you're tenured this is the time to do it, your first couple of years. If you fail with something new, an innovative program, that's okay, at least you're trying." So that was my impression was that we were very much a teaching [institution]—research was there but it's secondary. And when I came in 1999 it still had this everybody knows everybody feel to it. It's very different today. You just don't see people across campus, but when I came it just seemed like everybody knew everybody. So many people had been here since the beginning, and some of them are starting to retire now. But there was all this

history. You'd start hearing stories from people who had been here for a while. That was my impression, everybody knew everybody, teaching was first, the students—when I came I wasn't too excited in the demographics of the students in the sense that they were all non-traditional students, older students, and I was worried because I thought, what can I teach them because they have so much life experiences out there, but in retrospect that turned out to be a very good thing because that enriched all the classes. They'd have stories about what we talked about in class, and those stories would just come out. The average age would be in the thirties, particularly in the upper level classes, so that actually became a very good thing; I was very excited about that.

TS: But it was not something that you had ever experienced before?

DJ: I've always worked a lot with adult Ed, but it was like teaching Spanish 101 or basic English to adults. The courses I was teaching here, some of them were not those kind of basic courses, so I was a little more hesitant, but as I said it turned out much better because they really enriched the classes.

TS: What courses did they bring you in to teach?

DJ: Well, as I say, I've taught a lot of the composition, the basic composition ESL.

TS: So all of the composition classes you teach are always for the second language.

DJ: They're always international students, ESL students. So that was one area; the other area they wanted me to teach was upper level language and by language I mean like history of the English language or intro to linguistics course, a lot of the issues about language learning and the history of it. So those are the kind of courses, the two areas that I taught in primarily for sometime. The upper level one was where the older students had so much to offer. My sense is that it's changing now on both those fronts. There seems to be, as Dr. [Daniel S.] Papp says, more emphasis on research and the students just seem to be getting younger. Maybe I'm getting older, but they seem to getting you know, not in their late twenties or thirties but more the traditional age.

TS: I think the statistics bear that out, in part because of the residence halls, not necessarily because all the traditional-aged students are living in the residence halls, although with over 2000 students on campus living in residence halls, they're going to be the younger students, but apparently just the fact that we've got the residence halls attracts more students right out of high school even if they are going to live at home.

DJ: I think so, and my sense is students view it more as a "real college" because we have dorms and more athletics, so I think it's more of, like you say, a viable option for the younger students whereas before it was always the commuter students who had families, full-time jobs, and as you know that was a little bit different mix in the classes.

- TS: I think part of the rationale for residence halls beyond the need for students that need to live there is that it does create a critical mass to support things like the basketball games and concerts on campus.
- DJ: That may very well be. It was a shock when they started dorms because we were a commuter school, a teaching school.
- TS: Yeah, in '99 we were still a commuter school.
- DJ: And that's the way we were going to stay. I kept hearing this. Then these changes started a couple of years later. I think there has been a little bit of tension on campus. Not everybody is happy with all the changes.
- TS: That's interesting from that perspective that in 1999 you didn't have a clue that they were going to build residence halls.
- DJ: I was under the impression it would be residential. Athletics were there but it was going to be secondary, research was secondary.
- TS: And it would not be residential.
- DJ: It would not be residential. At least that was the message I was hearing.
- TS: I think that's probably true in '99. It's really about 2000 that the Foundation really pushed for residence halls and the parking decks. As I understand it they pretty much took the lead.
- DJ: Well, I can remember distinctly the day we got an e-mail that dorms are coming, we've hired a residential advisor, whatever you call somebody to be in charge of the dorms, residential life, I just remember thinking that's going to change things and it has.
- TS: But you were saying that you were actually very comfortable with the idea of a commuter campus.
- DJ: I was excited about dorms because I thought it would add a new dynamic, and it's just changed. I won't say it's better or worse. Instead of classes with a lot of older students who are married and have jobs, I have younger students. So I think my teaching has changed a little bit.
- TS: More of a challenge or less of a challenge or a different challenge?
- DJ: Well, I guess it's a different challenge because you take someone who's twenty, they don't have some of the life experience as someone who's thirty-eight does in the same class. There are less thirty-eight year olds and more twenty year olds, so it's just kind of different. I can't assume some of the things that they would know.

- TS: Yes. What about motivation and things of that sort?
- DJ: That's actually been a bit of a challenge because if they're back to school in their thirties or even forties, they're here out of their own free will, so they're going to show up and do their work and contribute. Some of the younger students are great students and some are here because they think they're supposed to be here; they really don't know yet what it is they want to do, so they just go to college. Sometimes the motivation is not as strong with the younger students although there are plenty of exceptions of very good students.
- TS: These students that are taking your composition class are all English Second Language; do you find this shift in them too, to be younger than they were?
- DJ: A little bit; that population has stayed more the same. They weren't as old as some of the upper division students, but they weren't as young either. To make a long story short, the composition classes are somewhere in their twenties. They may have gone to college in their own country for several years, so they're here, but they're not quite eighteen like the traditional freshman classes.
- TS: I'm teaching an oral history class this semester, and I've just got nine in there. One of them is seventy-six years old and another one is sixty-five years old. First class in a long time where I had two people in it that were older than I am.
- DJ: Well, actually that's one thing I've been reflecting on; now I'm getting to be twice the age of most of my students; when I started a lot of them were older than me, so I guess that's just the nature of the way things go.
- TS: Right. So when you got here in '99 the emphasis is very strongly on teaching, but you're teaching very heavy loads with a four-four. In fact, I didn't know anybody was teaching a four-four in '99.
- DJ: Well, it shifted very quickly after that. I guess it was 2000 or 2001, I can't remember, Susan Hunter, who was in charge of the graduate program, asked me if I wanted to start teaching that. So I did and you had to go through a little application procedure, and if you started teaching graduate then it dropped down to three-three, but then the scholarship expectations rose equivalent with that.
- TS: What are you teaching now?
- DJ: I'm still on a three-three, so that's the standard graduate faculty load.
- TS: Are you doing majority graduate classes?
- DJ: No, I typically do two undergraduate and one graduate each semester. So I do two graduate classes a year. Typically I teach quite a bit during the summer, so I'll probably do another undergraduate and one graduate too.

- TS: So three a year.
- DJ: Basically three graduate classes a year.
- TS: And in terms of scholarship expectations, is that considered a heavy graduate load in English or modest? Certainly not light.
- DJ: You mean the teaching load or the scholarship load?
- TS: Well, there's kind of a cut off isn't there like if you're doing majority graduate courses the scholarship expectations are a lot higher?
- DJ: Well, that's always been a nebulous area for me; I was on the Tenure and Promotion committee for a couple of years, and I think this is one thing that Kennesaw has to do is nail down the graduate faculty—what exactly that means for scholarship because there are some faculty that only teach graduate courses and some like me do a combination. I've never been real clear on what the expectations are as far as we don't use numbers here at Kennesaw; we don't say six articles or one book, and so they just say higher expectations but it's never been real clear what that means. Just do the best you can and hope that whoever reviews you thinks you did well enough.
- TS: I think that would be good if we could define all of that; I teach one graduate class every year or two. That's not exactly graduate teaching, and so I guess I don't know where the expectations are.
- DJ: Well, but my understanding is that a lot of Research I institutions, that's all the graduate teaching that a lot of their faculty do is just one or two a year maybe, and they're considered graduate faculty. So I don't know. Kennesaw has to work that out.
- TS: I think probably what would make more sense is what is you're teaching load. If you're teaching four-four you don't have any time for scholarship.
- DJ: No. My first year or two with a four-four, just maybe a small article, maybe a conference or two, but that's about all you can do.
- TS: It just comes out of your hide because if you teach four classes properly you don't have time left for anything else.
- DJ: Unless you do it on Christmas break or summers or something you just don't have the time.
- TS: And three-three is tough enough.
- DJ: Three-three, you have a little more time, but it's still busy.

- TS: If you're doing four-four the scholarship expectations shouldn't be heavy. If you're three-three a little heavier; if you're doing a two-two, a lot heavier; if you're doing a one-one, real heavy. You better do something to justify your existence. That would probably be what would make sense. The way you're describing the students in '99 is well, how would you describe them? You did in terms of demographics, but what about in terms of did they meet your expectations in terms of the way they performed in the classroom?
- DJ: I think so. I've talked to many faculty members; I was talking to Judy [M.] Holzman [Professor of Inclusive Education] the other day . . .
- TS: Who has been here a long time.
- DJ: Who has been here a long time, and she has said from day one, and I agree with her, we have always had a good group of students, well educated for the most part, highly motivated, and they come with good ideas. There are always some exceptions, but overall I've been very happy with the level of students here. I don't find them second tiered students by any means. I think this goes to a lot of non-traditional students, and I think Kennesaw has raised its expectations a bit; so overall; in my nine years here I've not been disappointed in the level of students at all.
- TS: Did you do much teaching at Purdue before you came here?
- DJ: I did. Just like at A&M I was a teaching assistant, so I did Spanish and composition courses.
- TS: How would Kennesaw students compare to those at A&M and at Purdue?
- DJ: To be honest, I didn't notice a huge difference. In any class you have those stellar students and those in the middle and some who are a little lower, but overall I would say they were comparable to those two institutions.
- TS: I think that might be surprising to a lot of people. You can look at SAT scores but they don't necessarily tell you anything except for the students that are coming straight out of high school, and we've got all these students that have transferred in and are older students and so on that don't figure in that SAT score at all, but bring life experiences with them.
- DJ: I remember my first class here there was a father and son in one of my upper level classes. He, best I remember, worked some type of engineering type job. I was explaining the concept of the analogy in linguistics. I wasn't really getting through and he said, "Let me help." And he explained it way better than I could because of his background, some kind of engineering field, and he was probably in his forties.
- TS: Right. I came here and taught a few years in the late 1960s and still had some graduate work to complete, so I took a leave of absence, and I guess I was a teaching assistant at the University of Tennessee. It was a surprise to me that I couldn't see any difference in

the students. I think, probably, I don't know how much you can generalize about all of this, but probably there's not a whole lot of difference overall between students anywhere, maybe, I don't know.

DJ: I don't know how much you can generalize. All I can say is that the places I've been at Purdue and A&M and here I haven't noticed a big difference. And sometimes at places like Purdue and A&M people get so much into sorority life and fraternity life and football games, and they're good students, but they stop doing their work. Kennesaw hasn't had that, so that's one thing Kennesaw needs to think twice about bringing too much of that here, then maybe you'll lose a few students who get too wrapped up in all that. All those are fun and good things but . . .

TS: Our real strength has been the non-traditional nature of the campus.

DJ: I remember Ed [Edwin A.] Rugg [former Vice President for Academic Affairs] in orientation nine years ago, he said, "Our traditional student is the non-traditional student." That was the message we kept hearing during orientation, and it was true.

TS: Yes. When you came in what did they tell you? They obviously said teaching; don't worry that much about scholarship. What about service. What did they say there?

DJ: Well, there was that model of the secondary area had to either be service or research. Laura Dabundo, who was a very good chair, said, "If you think about service try to do some service where you start making connections across campus, not just English department committees but across campus." That was very good advice and that's where I ended up meeting Judy Holzman, and we collaborated a lot through the years. That was the message I got was do some service and Laura had very good advice about get out and meet people and make these connections and sit on a committee with somebody and maybe find a common interest. Judy and I have published together and gone to conferences together and that sort of thing.

TS: Yes. Judy came here in the early 1970s and taught Spanish for years and now she's over in the Bagwell College of Education with the department of Inclusive Education.

DJ: That's a recent change. It used to be special education and now it's inclusive education. So the service expectations were there, and I always got the impression you could do a lot of committee work and that's good and necessary, but see what other kind of service you can do that has a real impact whether it's on students or the community in your professional area, so that's what I tried to do over the years.

TS: Okay. Well, your award this year was for teaching. Why don't we talk a little bit about teaching philosophy and teaching techniques and things of that sort. Maybe I could just ask you, what is your philosophy of teaching?

DJ: Well, I've been working on this through the years; Dr. Crain, I go back to him as a mentor, he said a couple of things that have always stayed with me: No matter what it is

you're teaching, some of the material is inherently interesting to students and some just simply is not, so you always have to find interesting material or make the process interesting to the students whether it's a different kind of teaching technique, but something that the students can get interested in even if it's just the process. It may be as simple as doing some kind of game or something in class that keeps their attention and focus. I've always believed in preparing well for class, and that's one of my pillars: preparation for each and every class. I believe you can over prepare but I think more often than not . . .

TS: You CAN over prepare?

DJ: You can over prepare and sometimes I'm guilty of that, trying to have it too regimented.

TS: Oh, I know everything so I don't need to listen to you, let me just tell you what the truth is.

DJ: Well, maybe not so much about the material but the process; I'm going to do this for five minutes, this for ten minutes, this for five minutes. And that's something I've worked on through the years, and if a student had a question, we started going a different way, and that would get off my schedule. So I've worked on that. I still have a very good game plan but try to be a little more flexible as things shake out in the classroom.

TS: So preparation is one pillar.

DJ: Preparation is one pillar; motivation is another pillar, and that goes back to the idea of the interesting process, to motivate the students to somehow want to learn the material, to want to be in class. Another pillar that I make is this idea that the students have to take whatever it is you're teaching and somehow make it their own. I'm really anti-spitting-it-back on the paper: here's the lecture; spit it back on the paper; and we all know how long the students remember that—not very long. Somehow they make it their own whether it's dealing with the knowledge or the attitudes or the concepts, somehow they have to internalize it and reflect on it.

TS: How do you help them do that?

DJ: Well, a lot of reflection papers, I do a lot of open-ended questions. I won't say the answers or where I come down on this issue, but here are three or four different perspectives on this particular issue, and you have to decide; you have to justify why it is you believe that on this issue.

TS: How do you grade something like that?

DJ: That's difficult because you're talking about their opinions and how they justify it. If they have good reasons, good writing skills, then they usually get a good grade on those type assignments.

- TS: It's not so much what their opinion is, but how well they can defend their opinion.
- DJ: Exactly, and it's not the objective quizzes and tests. That's a different kind of assessment that I do, but this is more assessing have they internalized this. Like, for instance, dialects and how do we view the southern dialect and the northern dialect, the California dialect. A lot of research says that teachers—and this is who I deal with a lot is people who will be English teachers—how they view different dialects has a tremendous impact on how they view that student's capacity to learn. So if they have a really strong southern accent, there are certain stereotypes that go with that, and we have to guard against that.
- TS: Slow drawl means low intelligence.
- DJ: Exactly. There is that perception, and it's reinforced by Hollywood. So we see clips of movies where this perception or this stereotype is reinforced, so we have to analyze that. Dr. Crain, I remember saying, "You're not supposed to, but it happens. You will judge a student, particularly the younger students when they walk in the classroom—if a student is all neatly dressed, and his mom has made sure they comb their hair, you have certain expectations versus the disheveled student who looks like he was just thrown together. It has nothing to say about their intelligence or capability, but we judge a little bit even though we're not supposed to."
- TS: We're very relieved when they all come in well dressed because we know it's going to be easier to teach them.
- DJ: Yes, well, we assume that. What I do in linguistics is tell them, "Not only do we do that with the way people dress, but the way people speak. Whether it's this dialect or that dialect we have expectations with that dialect, so we have to guard against that." And that's very hard to grade. So we do these reflection papers, class discussions. I've gone more with technology having them find clips of movies and incorporate them into Power Points, and maybe do a little number analysis, how many of these movies portray southern dialects as inferior or what-have-you. So that's what I mean by they need to internalize that kind of information or that kind of concept and then reflect on it. A lot of students have said they've never really thought about it like that before as far as the dialect issues, so that's another piece of my teaching philosophy that I do.
- TS: I can't think of anything more valuable in going into a classroom than to recognize what your own biases are.
- DJ: Well, we all have them.
- TS: Some are obvious, but to think in terms of a dialect being a trigger that this is a smart student, this is a troubled student, troubling to deal with.
- DJ: William Labov, a socio-linguist who deals with linguistics and society and how they interact, has been a leader in that field for a long time and has done many articles about

teacher expectations and dialect. His conclusion is that's a teacher's number one way in which we size students up is by what comes out of their mouths. We're not supposed to, but we do.

TS: What's a good two-cent definition of linguistics?

DJ: Linguistics is the scientific study of language—dialects, speech production, the way language is learned. There are lots of different areas of linguistics, but the quick definition is any scientific study of language use.

TS: You've done your scholarship on dialects, so why don't we just pick up with that a little bit.

DJ: Yes, that's been one of my research areas; would you like to know a little bit about that?

TS: Yes, absolutely.

DJ: Well, I tell my students kind of as a joke, the last article I've been working on and the last presentation dealt with the "Andy Griffith Show," and so I have all those. I've been transcribing a lot of his dialect and how through the years it's changed. If you go back and read the history of the show, he was very embarrassed by his dialect.

TS: He was?

DJ: He was. Andy Griffith.

TS: Andy Griffith was embarrassed?

DJ: Andy Griffith was embarrassed by his dialect—the first two years of the show he was supposedly, reportedly, very embarrassed by the dialect. If you go back and watch it you can see how it becomes from very Appalachian, North Carolina, to more standard as the years go by.

TS: Really? He started out as kind of a stand-up comedian using all that.

DJ: And that was part of his comedic entertainment.

TS: And playing on all those stereotypes.

DJ: Right. But through the years he became more self-conscious of that, and even the producers at CBS wanted him to change because they thought . . .

TS: Away from Appalachian?

DJ: Away from Appalachian dialect to more standard because they thought it would appeal to a greater audience, the show would, and in fact that's what happened during its eight

year run. So I tell my students, I joke, if you become a professor you can just sit around and watch Andy Griffith all day. I transcribe and look at how certain vowels have changed through the years of the show or certain expressions that he used a lot in the beginning that he no longer uses—non-standard expressions—and switched to something more standard through the years.

TS: I wonder if there's any correlation between that shift to more mainstream and the popularity of the show?

DJ: That's interesting. I think the producers I know were very worried that it wouldn't have as large an appeal if they continued on this kind of southern dialect, so through the years that got cleaned up. So that's one area in research that I've been doing. I use that as an example in class with students.

TS: There's a professor at the University of Tennessee that spent much of his career on the "Andy Griffith Show."

DJ: A history professor?

TS: I think he's in the English department at the University of Tennessee. [Richard Kelly, Professor emeritus and author of *The Andy Griffith Show* (1981)].

DJ: That's interesting. I've read several studies about it, and I'm trying to work up one on his dialect specifically.

TS: Okay. And what else have you been working on?

DJ: Well, I still do a lot with second language writing. That's kind of a different area of research, but the process by which students acquire facility with written English when it's not their native language. I teach a graduate course in that, teaching writing to speakers of other languages. A lot of the MAPW [Master of Arts in Professional Writing] students want to be composition teachers, and so invariably they will have non-native speakers in their class where they teach. I've done research on that; I've done a lot of interviews with students and teachers as far as that goes about the process of second language writing. So those are two areas that I've been dealing with, and they're both very much connected obviously to education.

TS: What have you been finding out about the process of second language writing?

DJ: Well, there's a whole lot there we could talk about for a long time, but one thing is how different cultures view good writing in different ways. We always in the American tradition view good writing as very clear, up-front, reader friendly. Other traditions think that's too simplistic; you need to beat around the bush longer, let the reader figure things out for themselves, like the Japanese tradition is like that. They think we're too straightforward. Why give away your whole idea, your thesis at the beginning? Let the reader try to figure it out with you. It's just different perspectives, and that's one thing

that we have to tell students who are in the class as well as their prospective teachers. They will be coming at what is good writing from different perspectives.

TS: I had never thought about that. So if we've got students in our classes from different cultures maybe, we should judge their writing on their basis of where they came from instead of our standards.

DJ: Well, at least it's a consideration—something to think about. Even though students who are completely proficient in standard English—I've had many students say, "Well, we write in Kenya in English all the time, but we don't write like this; it just seems like a different style. An essay I write for you would be different than an essay I would write for my Kenyan English professor. It would be a little bit different."

TS: Do you make a conscious distinction between the different Boyer labels like scholarship of discovery which is what the Andy Griffith sounds like and scholarship of teaching which is what the linguistic work sounds like with the second language?

DJ: I have heard this Boyer model since I came here—the scholarship of teaching—I keep hearing that—and I think it's a good way to look at scholarship. So I guess I do do that different kind of different scholarship, some. It's really focused on how to make a better teacher. Others are more traditional scholarship of discovery. I've never really thought much about the scholarship of teaching until I came here. Coming from a Research I it's always research, research, research—all the graduate students are thinking that. Then I started here hearing about the scholarship of teaching through the years.

TS: But your Ph.D. dissertation was kind of scholarship of teaching, wasn't it?

DJ: It was, but I guess theirs was considered more traditional because it was an education type dissertation.

TS: So you're basically saying those Boyer divisions don't mean a whole lot to you.

DJ: I think the line is blurry a little bit; I accept them, but I understand the difference.

TS: As I understand it, where Boyer was coming from originally was that people were saying this is legitimate research for Research I and this isn't, and legitimate research was scholarship of discovery, and applied research of various types was considered a lower quality, and he was trying to make the case that these are all important types of research and all ought to be honored.

DJ: Right and I accept that; that's what I mean by the line is a little bit blurry because if it advances knowledge we can call it discovery or scholarship of teaching. But if it advances the field, then.... I know that's one reason I've always been very happy at Kennesaw because I know some of the work that I would do or what my colleagues would publish, at certain Research I institutions it wouldn't count for anything. I think that's a shame because it should. Here it is valued so that's one reason I was happy and

have been happy with Kennesaw; I can go off and write an article on “X” that would be accepted here as part of my scholarship, and I know at some place else it would not be. But that’s what I was most interested in, if I thought it would advance the field. I think there is a little bit of a shift—my impression—at Research I they are shifting a little bit; they’re starting to see the wisdom of some of that kind of scholarship.

TS: That came out in the Sarah [R.] Robbins interview, by the way. She talked about how she thinks Research I’s are coming our way while we’re going their way.

DJ: That’s interesting; it’s ironic that that’s going on, but I definitely get that when I go to conferences, and I see so-and-so from this Research I and that the kind of work that they’re doing fits more what we’re doing here; so things are shifting.

TS: Right. The Carnegie definitions are whatever.

DJ: Right, they are shifting a little bit.

TS: That is interesting and hopeful, I think; I hope that’s the case.

DJ: I think so. You read articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about people lamenting well, why can’t this be considered for scholarship when it clearly is.

TS: Let’s see, you’ve got a book (*Dispelling Linguistic Misconceptions*) that the University of Michigan Press is going to publish sometime soon?

DJ: In fact, I’m supposed to get the final version in a few weeks here to make any last minute changes; it should come out in January or February of 2008. [Published under the title, *How Myths about Language Affect Education: What Every Teacher Should Know* (University of Michigan Press, May, 2008)]

TS: All right. That’s not long off.

DJ: Not long off. Hopefully everything will keep proceeding; we’ll see.

TS: Is this kind of a handbook for teachers or how would you describe—who is likely to read this book?

DJ: The target audience is for English teachers, whether they have ESL students or not. What we were just talking about, the dialect, that’s a whole chapter there; those are the kind of issues that I think are important for English professionals to be aware of. I think a lot of English students will go through and study all the literature, and that’s great and wonderful, but they don’t always study some of the language issues. I’m trying to fill that gap with this book, whether it’s dealing with dialects or ESL students. Part of it deals with dictionaries, how dictionaries make a decision when to include a word and when not to include a word.

- TS: Or whether it's slang or mainstream?
- DJ: Whether it's slang or mainstream or standard English.
- TS: And they're changing all the time, every edition.
- DJ: Exactly. And people get upset with every edition because, "How can you include this word? It's slang." But the dictionary says, "We consider it standard English now." So those are the kind of issues I deal with in the book. The title is still in a state of flux; the last e-mail I got from them they didn't like the title. So we're still negotiating what the final title will be. But that's the book, and it grew out of my linguistics class where we talk about these issues of dictionaries, and dialects, and the history of the language. This has been a whole learning experience because this is my first real book, and I'm over here thinking of the scholarship and all that, and they keep thinking of the sales, so that's been interesting, what would sell best.
- TS: Why University of Michigan Press? Why did you send it there?
- DJ: The University of Michigan Press—in their linguistics department they publish this kind of book. I've read several books from them, and it just seemed the most appropriate publisher.
- TS: Is this part of a series they've got?
- DJ: It's not part of a series, but they've published a lot of books on language and linguistics, and it just seemed like it would be a good fit. So I sent them an abstract, they said send us a chapter, and it went on from there.
- TS: Since you've been here eight years now I guess this is something that's been produced while you were here at Kennesaw.
- DJ: Produced while I was here, yes, completely here. As I said, it grew out of the linguistics class I teach. I would use this example and that would go over well or this one would; so I started putting the good examples together in a book format.
- TS: I see.
- DJ: The idea too is there's a lot out there in the mainstream press. They somehow get it wrong what language is, how it functions, and I started collected news articles from the *AJC* or *Newsweek* that would mention language, and I'd say, "No, that's not exactly right." I would bring those into class and say, "Let's look at this." Those were against what our textbook says. Here's a journalist who doesn't know about language but just repeated what's in the popular folklore about language. So I would use those examples. That was the beginning of the book, putting those together.

TS: Have you run across the concept on our campus or has anybody encouraged you this way that there ought to be an integration of teaching and scholarship?

DJ: Oh, yes. I think Ed Rugg, as I mentioned at the beginning of orientation, was . . .

TS: What he said?

DJ: The math professor who wrote *Earth Algebra*.

TS: Nancy [E.] Zumoff.

DJ: Yes, Nancy Zumoff. He mentioned her as an example, “This is the kind of scholarship and work we love to see here.” Somehow teaching and scholarship just get combined seamlessly; so that example always stuck with me, that example.

TS: Well, good for Ed to do that.

DJ: She came to talk to us, the twenty new faculty members.

TS: Nancy came and talked?

DJ: Nancy came, and I’ve heard that through the years too that that is just really valued here. And then sitting on the T&P committee I saw that—that’s what got a lot of high praise.

TS: The Tenure and Promotion committee?

DJ: Right.

TS: And so you’ve moved in that direction?

DJ: I’ve moved in that direction. As I say, I don’t think a Research I would consider this—well, they might consider it, but I don’t think they would see it as the hard core . . .

TS: Not hard core scholarship of discovery?

DJ: Right, exactly.

TS: But the kind of thing that Boyer would probably be excited about.

DJ: Exactly.

TS: You’ve done a number of articles that have to do with teaching, and I guess your articles have been primarily about second language, is that right?

DJ: Right.

- TS: Let's see, the *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* is one of them.
- DJ: I actually did that with one of my major professors and a couple of other graduate students. There were a couple of articles we did. It had to do with the spread of English around the world and how people feel about it—is it encroaching or not encroaching.
- TS: Now, in linguistics how do they define applied linguistics?
- DJ: Applied linguistics used to be synonymous with teaching language—any linguistics research that dealt with teaching a foreign language or a second language. Now I think it's a little broader when you talk about applied linguistics, like language policies, like the big debate—should we declare English as the official language, the national language of the U.S.? Add a constitutional amendment or not? That's an area of applied linguistics. I think applied linguists have something to say about that, so I think the idea of applied has gone from just teaching to policies and language planning.
- TS: Going from the abstract to actually influencing governmental decision-making?
- DJ: Yes. And several linguists have testified before Congress about these kinds of issues. There was the famous case in Michigan, the “Black English” case, you know, what should we do about Ebonics, that whole issue. So there have been several linguists to testify before Congress and educational experts on that issue.
- TS: And what was the nature of the case? Whether you should accept African American students' use of Black English?
- DJ: Well, that's a huge debate. Linguists would say it's a variety of English as valid, from a linguistic perspective, as any other dialect, but it doesn't have the social currency that some other dialect does.
- TS: It might not help you get a good job at IBM.
- DJ: Exactly. But from a linguistic perspective it's valid, but society views it differently, so we have to . . .
- TS: So what should we teach in English 1101?
- DJ: Well, standard English, but acknowledging that there are other varieties out there. It's a tricky area. A lot of people say, well, there's just standard English, and that's all there is to it, and that's not exactly true.
- TS: It's got to be a challenge—I know it's a challenge because I've taught plenty of them over the years—to teach English to students whose first language isn't English, even if they've been here for a number of years. How do you, first of all, maintain standards or maybe how do you measure whether they've learned enough to succeed across the board when they go into say history classes?

- DJ: If I can answer that question—that is the eternal question. In the graduate class I mentioned, when is the writing good enough? When they go and take a business or history and their professor doesn't really care about their background, just can they write well enough, that's a big area of debate. Tony Silva said we need to be a little bit more cosmopolitan about it. We wouldn't count off somebody that had a foreign accent, but gave a very good presentation. So the same thing in writing, there will always be a bit of a written accent, so we need to be a little more cosmopolitan and realize that some non-native speakers will never be native-like in their writing. So then the issue is, well, do you grade them separately or differently or have different standards, and that's a decision each professor has to make, and that's the eternal question. It's a tough question.
- TS: And how do you deal with it in terms of determining whether they've passed your course?
- DJ: Well, we talk about what is good enough, what is acceptable, what will be accepted out there or expected out there in other courses. I tell them I know you're a non-native speaker, but out there in your history class they may not know or even give it any consideration. We talk a lot about ways to get help too, whether it's the writing center or a native speaker to look over your paper and let them point out a few errors here and there.
- TS: Well, maybe it's just common sense, but when you've got students in your classes that are not native speakers, you know that they need more time to write an essay exam than native speakers do, and they're going to spend a lot more time doing their readings if they're going to stay up.
- DJ: Right. And that's an issue for the literature courses because there's the sophomore level, the general education courses where everybody has to take world literature. Well, my ESL students say, "We have to read this fifty pages short story" or whatever, and they spend an inordinate amount of time looking up words, and it just takes them hours and hours to get through ten pages, particularly if it's older English or something that they're not familiar with it just takes them so long when they get out their Chinese to English dictionary it just takes them forever. So vocabulary, I really try to emphasize vocabulary when I'm teaching non-native speakers; it's just, if you get the vocabulary then you can proceed, if you don't then it's just . . .
- TS: It's amazing that even something like a Joel Chandler Harris story these days, students come in and say, "I couldn't understand what he was saying." This can be native English speakers.
- DJ: And think for non-native it would be . . .
- TS: Then for the non-native, boy, they're just totally lost. So maybe part of your job here is to sensitize everybody to this reality?

- DJ: Well, that's part of the frustration. Sometimes you have people say, "Well, how long will it take to learn English? I have a student who's a non-native speaker, what can I do to help them?" And there's not an easy answer, I can't give you a three-minute answer. The big thing is it just takes a lot of time and dedication on the part of the students, but it's not an easy answer.
- TS: I saw in the paper yesterday where Johnny Isakson was saying that one of the flaws—he's a strong support of No Child Left Behind—but one of the flaws is that schools have something like just one year for non-native English students to get up to speed, and schools need longer before they're penalized with the test results.
- DJ: Yes, because after a year their scores are included with everybody's scores.
- TS: And he was saying that was ridiculous.
- DJ: Well, it affects some schools, and some schools get very frustrated because they'll have 70 percent non-native speakers—that's the population for that school. So they always look like they're doing a bad job, but they are not. It's just the English level is not there.
- TS: They may be doing a better job than anybody else, but they've just got a greater challenge.
- DJ: Exactly. And it won't be reflected in the scores while this school over here has a hundred percent native speakers, so they don't have to deal with that.
- TS: Right. Well, we started with teaching philosophy, and we've gone in many directions from teaching philosophy, and I wondered if we could return to your teaching a little bit; do you use technology very much in the classroom?
- DJ: I do quite a bit, I use my web page. I post all my Power Points to my web page. I'm not a huge proponent of WebCT. I prefer to just use my own web page instead of using WebCT. I'm afraid the ITS police will come get me one day for doing that, but I prefer that. I use a lot of sound files because there are so many sound files out there. When we analyze different dialects I can find them and incorporate them in. So I try to use quite a bit of technology I think. I try to make it add to the class and not detract, and I think that's important. Other things that I do, I use the technology to break classes up. I think that's an important thing because very few people can listen fifty minutes to one person talk or an hour and fifteen minutes, and so I'll try to use technology or bits of a video or a sound file just to change things up a little bit. When Dr. Crain came to observe me that was one thing he said. He said, "You have to change speed every now and then and do things a little bit differently." So I use technology quite a bit.
- TS: It looks like you're a proponent of what they call learner-centered education.
- DJ: I am. I think it can be overdone. I'm a little, to be honest, suspicious of people who always say, oh, I'm just completely learner-centered; I just try to fade in the background.

I don't think that's instructor's place to just fade into the background because I think we have some expertise to say, and I think we need to say it and to offer it.

TS: Otherwise, why are they paying us?

DJ: Otherwise, why are they there? I heard one instructor say one time my best teaching days are when I hardly say anything at all. Well, why be there? So I think learner-centered is good, but I think you can go overboard. I'm a big proponent of discovery learning. I try to ask probing questions.

TS: Discovery learning. How are you defining that?

DJ: Well, here're some issues, here are some concepts, let's try to figure out together what this means. I may know the answer, but instead of just telling them, I think they will integrate it more—to go back to that idea—if together as a class we get there instead of me just telling it. The idea of just telling somebody doesn't stay with them very long. I try to use more of a Socratic method now and then, try to probe people and get them to see where they're really coming from, so I try to vary techniques as much as possible. Graduate students are much different than freshmen than upper level, so I'm always very aware of that, the different levels that they are.

TS: And actually your nomination [for the Distinguished Teaching Award] originally came out of the graduate college, didn't it?

DJ: It did, it came out of that. That was actually one of the more nerve-racking semesters I had. I never taught a graduate course, and I didn't know what to expect. Dr. Hunter said, "Why don't you teach this course and start being graduate faculty?" So I did, and it went very well, but I was very nervous the whole semester. Going into it I didn't know what to expect, but, yes, it did come out of that. I've taught several different graduate programs, not only the English but also I've also taught quite a bit in the department of Special Education, which is now Inclusive Education. I even taught a language and culture course in the [Coles] College of Business, so I've taught in different areas. It's all language related but . . .

TS: Is that a graduate class in the Coles College?

DJ: It was a graduate class for folks who were starting their MBA to get them up to speed—a little bit about culture.

TS: Oh, that's right. You were basically interpreting America to international students.

DJ: Exactly. Things like group work, the Coles College of Business, there's so much group work in an MBA, and they came from traditions where there was no group work. So the course tries to get them up to speed on this is the American system.

- TS: Yes, that sounded like a very interesting course, American Culture for International MBA students.
- DJ: Right.
- TS: That sounds like an exciting course to teach.
- DJ: Well, I think there were some complaints. Other MBA students and professors, they just don't know our system here. So when they do their group projects there would be a little tension there, so it was a way to try to help smooth that out a little bit.
- TS: Do you do anything with the Institute for Global Initiatives?
- DJ: Not a whole lot. I am actually going to England to teach this summer. I haven't done a whole lot with them just because I've been busy with other places.
- TS: Right. Give me a definition of master teacher.
- DJ: Oh, that's a good question. Gosh, a master teacher. I think a master teacher is somebody who makes the material relevant and interesting to the students, engages all students. True master teachers can somehow engage even the student at the back who never opens his or her mouth, is really quiet; a master teacher can somehow engage that kind of person. A master teacher can make the material present for the student for a long time; they don't just forget it the second they go out, whether it's examples they use or the procedures they use that they will remember that material or course or concept for a long time. I think there's many ways to do that, but I think master teachers are good at that. What else would a master teacher be? Somebody who is well versed in his or her field and is up on the latest trend or knowledge in the field. Somebody who enjoys learning. I think that enthusiasm comes out. I think that's another part of being a master teacher is being enthusiastic even on a Monday morning when you don't really care that much about your field, but you've got to pretend like you are. I heard a definition one time of a teacher that is one-third scholar, one-third preacher, and one-third actor, and I always thought that was an interesting mix. I think we play those different roles to various degrees. I hope that got to what a master teacher is.
- TS: That sounds real good. Well, what are you proudest of of your career at Kennesaw?
- DJ: One thing I've always tried to be is a professional, and when—and this is an older student, not the younger student—occasionally a student will say to me. "I really enjoyed your class and I enjoyed the professionalism with which you conducted it." You treat everybody as professionally as you can, and when students say, "I enjoyed the professionalism of this class," that doesn't mean it's boring or a grind, but it's fun, it's interesting, and everything is professional. That is one of the highs I get when students say that sort of thing. I enjoy when students come back a semester or two later and say, "All that stuff that we talked about, well, I saw this on the news and I thought of your class." Those are kind of highs, which we all get from time to time; that makes me very

proud. The collaboration I think I've done with some wonderful people here: Judy Holzman and Laura Dabundo and Susan [B.] Brown and my colleagues from English, that makes me very . . .

TS: We haven't mentioned Susan Brown before; what did you do with her?

DJ: She was the department chair of Special Education, so she invited me to teach in an endorsement for teachers to be ESL teachers in K-12—those kinds of collaborations. This [Distinguished Teaching] award—I told my wife the other day, this has to be one of the proudest things. To this day I'm just completely shocked that I somehow made it through the system because there are so many fine teachers here. I'm just really shocked, but that has to be one of the proudest moments that other people would look at my material and say, "He seems to be doing a fairly good job in class."

TS: It sounds like more than fairly good.

DJ: Well, I don't know. I have a friend who says, "We never teach; we only try to teach." So you never know. I guess that's one of the frustrations of teaching is you never know the impact you have. You throw out those seeds and all this, and you just never know if it takes root or not. Sometimes I tell my wife I prefer mowing the yard because I can see exactly what I've done, but with teaching you don't know some days whether at the end of the day did I have any impact or not? So those times where you get some inkling that you had an impact. The scholarship I'm proud of, but it's the teaching—that's the reason I came here as opposed to a Research I. I applied to Research I [institutions], but it never seems right.

TS: Not what you wanted?

DJ: Even when I sent off the application, I said, "I hope they don't call." So the teaching here is probably what I'm most proud of.

TS: Well, you haven't been here a long time, nine years, but we often ask people what's kept them at Kennesaw.

DJ: What's kept me here? As far as professionally, the colleagues I've collaborate with, the English department and outside of. I never thought I'd be able to teach the range of courses that I get to at Kennesaw, just because of the connections across campus. Colleagues from graduate school will maybe they teach one or two courses every semester, and I get to do a whole range of courses. That's kept me here. I have never had any problems with the administration and that sort of thing; Dr. Dabundo shepherded me through the whole P&T process, and that was very helpful when I was going up for that.

TS: You all have been through a lot of changes in the English department.

DJ: Yes, I guess every department has some times that there are a lot of changes. I feel very fortunate that the whole P&T process for me was before there were any changes.

TS: You were tenured before?

DJ: I was tenured before there were a lot of changes that came upon us.

TS: Yes, that can be very disconcerting if the people who are making the judgments aren't the people that brought you in.

DJ: Yes, we have some faculty down here now who have been here four years or five years, and they've had five chairs in five years. And that is unnerving. Not that any of them were bad chairs, but just that there were differences.

TS: Well, there's a certain uncertainty when somebody new comes in.

DJ: Right. And I would say the other thing is I have just enjoyed being able to research in areas that I want to. I never wanted to be the expert at eighteenth century literature and that's the only thing that I ever research, you know, but there's the opportunity to go beyond that and look at other things, and hopefully it comes back and informs you're research in eighteenth century literature or whatever your area is. So that's kept me here. We like the area. Having two small children it's not always easy to pick up and move, so there's another thing.

TS: How old are they now.

DJ: They are nine and two.

TS: Nine and two.

DJ: Nine and two. The two year old keeps us hopping.

TS: I bet. A lot of lost sleep probably.

DJ: There's been a lot of lost sleep. Babies just have a way of doing that, but it's good, it's fun.

TS: Well, great. What do you see as the future for Kennesaw?

DJ: I think we will continue to grow. As Dan Papp said, "There's just no two ways about it, we'll continue to grow."

TS: You had mentioned earlier you thought we were going more toward scholarship.

DJ: I think so. I mean, that's clearly the message. Dean [Richard] Vengroff has said it, just echoing what President Papp has said. I think Kennesaw will have to continue to make

clear, what ARE the expectations for scholarship. When I was going up, it was SOME scholarship is enough, but now I think people are more uncomfortable, and there are shifting expectations.

TS: A lot of people I think have been told in recent years that don't make service your second area; make scholarship your second area.

DJ: I have heard that many times, just do very minimal service, still focus on teaching. I don't think Kennesaw will get away from that, and I hope that it never does that teaching becomes secondary to research. I don't foresee that, and I hope that it never happens. I hope that Kennesaw won't just pay the lip service to, "Oh, yes, we keep teaching first," when they really don't. I don't think that will happen because I think there are so many fine instructors here who just have a passion about teaching. So I think they won't let it happen because they don't want too much of their teaching time taken away to be devoted to research.

TS: The thing that's attracted people to Kennesaw is the focus on teaching?

DJ: Right. I think so. I think that's why a lot of people have stayed; they enjoy the interaction with the students whether it's in the classroom or out of the classroom.

TS: So teaching is number one, but scholarship is now number two?

DJ: Right. I think everyone will now have scholarship number two and ratchet it up just a little bit for everybody.

TS: And service three?

DJ: And service three. And particularly for the full professor, I think that the bar will continue to rise really high for that level.

TS: That seemed to be the message on people that got all the way up to the vice president's level and didn't go further last year.

DJ: Yeah, right, so I think some people are nervous about that if they ever want to go up to full professor, which will be me in a few years, so we'll see what happens. I think Kennesaw will have to—and I think they've done this well—when I came there was still that small town feel, but we've gotten so big that there have to be more policies and procedures in place as opposed to just picking up the phone and taking care of the business real quick because you know the person over there. So I think we'll have to look more like flagship universities as far as the procedures because 20,000 to 25,000 students is a lot of people.

TS: Right. How many faculty members do you have in the English department? Forty or fifty don't you?

DJ: Oh, we're well over fifty, I think.

TS: Do you know everybody in the English department?

DJ: I do not. When I came I think there were twenty-six people, and I knew everybody.

TS: And now it's twice that size.

DJ: And now it's twice that size, and I just don't know everybody. The building physically has gotten bigger, and so I don't see them. And then we have another fifty or sixty part-timers, so I mean it's just astronomical.

TS: It's remarkable to think that you would have doubled the size in eight years.

DJ: Right. I can remember sitting at faculty members and Laura called everybody names, so I was picking up everybody's names, and within a few weeks I knew everybody. But now people are so busy they don't even have time to come to departmental meetings a lot of times. There are [scheduling] conflicts, and we don't see them or they teach at night or other days that you don't teach. That I'm sad about. I wish I did know everybody better; I don't even know necessarily everybody's area of scholarship, what their area of expertise is.

TS: Well, what haven't we talked about that we should have?

DJ: Well, I don't know. I hope I didn't put you to sleep with this interview.

TS: No, this has been very interesting.

DJ: Well, I was a little intimidated because I thought, gosh, you've been interviewing people that have been here ten, fifteen, twenty years, and they have a lot more stories to tell than I do.

TS: Well, they've got a greater sense of change when they've been here a long time, but you've obviously been here long enough to detect a shift in culture, just in eight years.

DJ: Yes.

TS: At least to some degree; I think it's been a big degree in the last eight years.

DJ: I think so. I think there will be more to come. As I said, some of the folks that have been here twenty-five or thirty years, as they start to retire and a new crop of people [takes their place]—they won't know the old Kennesaw. I think I came in right at the tail end of that [era] for some reason to the new Kennesaw.

TS: Right. Well, you've still got a few old timers in the English department.

DJ: Yes, well, Don [Donald J.] Fay is still there; he's interesting to listen to, what happened back in the 1970s, the way things were then.

TS: Yes, he's been here since 1970.

DJ: Right. Recently Bob [Robert W.] Hill retired; he had been here awhile [since 1985]. But there are still a few long marchers over there.

TS: Well, certainly it's going to be a different place in ten years.

DJ: That's what I was telling my wife the other day. I have no idea what it will be like. If I'm still here in ten years or another twenty years, it will be completely different.

TS: With your book coming out you should certainly have made your case for scholarship, I would think.

DJ: Well, I hope so; we'll see.

TS: Well, I certainly appreciate the interview today.

DJ: Well, I appreciate your time. I hope it helps in whatever way. I appreciate your time too.

TS: Thank you.

INDEX

- Berns, Margie, 8
Brown, Susan B., 28
- Crain, John, 7, 14-16, 25
- Dabundo, Laura S., 1, 8, 14, 28, 31
- Fay, Donald J., 32
- Griffith, Andy (the Andy Griffith Show), 17-18
- Hill, Robert W., 32
Holzman, Judy M., 13-14, 28
Hunter, Susan M., 11, 26
- International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 23
Isakson, Johnny, 25
- Johnson, David M.
 Background, 1
 Undergraduate education, 1-3, 7
 High school teaching, 1, 3
 Master's degree, 1, 5
 Marriage, 1
 Doctoral program, 1, 3, 5-6, 8
 Joining KSU faculty, 1, 3, 8, 28
 Teaching linguistics, 5, 9, 16-17, 21
 Dissertation, 5-6
 Mentors, 7-8, 14-16, 25
 Teaching composition ESL, 9, 11, 23-25
 Differences in teaching traditional and non-traditional students, 9-11
 Teaching in MAPW program, 11-12, 18, 24, 26
 Philosophy of teaching, 14-16
 Assessing student work, 15-16
 Research on dialects, 17-18
 Research on second language writing, 18-19, 22-23
 Book, *How Myths about Language Affect Education*, 20-21
 Technology in the classroom, 25
 Learner-centered education, 25-26
 Discovery learning, 26
 Teaching classes for Bagwell and Coles Colleges, 26-27
 Definition of master teacher, 27
 Achievements at KSU, 27-28

Reasons for staying at KSU, 28-30
Children, 29
Johnson, Priya, 1, 7-8

Kelly, Richard, 18
Kennesaw State University
English as a Second Language (ESL) program, 3-4
International students, 3-5
Change in emphasis from teaching to research, 8-9, 12, 30
Non-traditional students, 9, 13-14
Residence halls, 9-10
KSU Foundation, 10
Teaching loads, 8, 11
Tenure and promotion standards, 12-13, 22
Students, quality of, 13-14
Service, 14
Department of Inclusive Education, 14, 26
Boyer model of scholarship (Ernest L. Boyer), 19-20, 22
Integration of teaching and scholarship, 22
Future directions, 29-30
English department, 28-32
Retirement of older generation of faculty members, 31-32

Labov, William, 16-17

Modern Language Association, 1

Noble, Linda M., 8

Papp, Daniel S., 9, 29
Purdue University, 1, 3, 5-6, 8, 13-14

Robbins, Sarah R., 20
Rugg, Edwin A., 14, 22

Saint Louis University, 2
Silva, Tony, 8, 24
Smyrna, Georgia, 5

Texas A&M University, 1, 13-14

University of Dallas, 1-2, 6-7

Vengroff, Richard, 29

Zumoff, Nancy E., 22